

# LONG ISLAND FORUM



Little Neck's First Post Office

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## LETTERS FROM FORUM READERS

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## THE LONG ISLAND FORUM

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FOR LONG ISLANDERS EVERYWHERE

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**PAUL BAILEY, Publisher-Editor**

Contributing Editors: Dr. John C. Huden, Julian Denton Smith, Roy E. Lott, Chester G. Osborne.

### New Howell Genealogy

I have presented to the Suffolk County Historical Society, Riverhead, a typewritten copy of Volumes Nos. 1 & 2 of a genealogy I have compiled over the past twenty years of "Richard Howell (1), Southold, N. Y., and some of his descendants." There are approximately 1500 names recorded in these two volumes, and comprise all of the relatives I have discovered, except a large group which resides, largely, in Utah and nearby states. As far as I know this is the first extensive genealogy of Richard (1).

The record of the Utah section of the family — almost as extensive as the total of Vols. Nos. 1 & 2 — was discovered a few years ago, after having been lost for seventy or eighty years. An Edmund Wheeler Howell, of the Middle Island branch, was converted on Long Island to Mormonism and with his family went "West" about 1850. He and several children died en route, but his widow, Sarah Vail Howell, of Riverhead, pushed on and reached Utah about 1852. The remaining children are the progenitors of the large Utah group, which has been recorded, and shortly will appear in Vol. 3, or Vols. No. 3 & 4.

Volumes Nos. 1 & 2 have been micro-filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah for their records, and a duplicate film has been deposited in the Genealogical Dept. of the central N. Y. Public Library. Other typewritten copies will be placed in other appropriate libraries.

There are undoubtedly errors of commission and omission — and other moot points — in this genealogy, and I invite comments, corrections and additions. Wilbur Franklin Howell, 39-43 47th Street, Sunnyside 4, L. I.

Sag Harbor, first organized as a Fire district in 1819, was not incorporated as a village until 1846. Before either of these steps was taken, it was made a port of entry, immediately after the Revolution.

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## Building a Barn in 1808

**A**NCIENT dwellings and barns roofed with cedar shingles are a characteristic part of the Long Island scene. Exposed to the sea-side weather of centuries, the cedar takes on varying shades of grey or brown and endures so well that some builders still prefer it to other woods or materials. Indeed, so many old roofs which survive are of cedar that one might assume that all old structures were so covered; but that was not the case in Mastic in 1808, when a contractor named Gilliad Miller put up a barn for "Point Billy", Captain William Smith at the Manor of St. George.

Gilliad used straw to make a roof of thatch which must have looked like the quaint, bulky roofs still seen in rural areas of the British Isles. His bill, still in existence among the Tangier Smith Papers, shows some other interesting details of construction a century and a half ago. For one thing, a farmer who wanted a new barn was expected to pay for the carpenter's lodging while he was on the job; that may have been necessary because the nearest carpenter may have lived half-a-day's ride away. Masons, too, had to be given board while working. In addition to these workmen, a blacksmith might be more briefly employed for "work and Iron", such as for making hinges, locks, or other hardware.

Taking down the remnants of the old barn and putting up the new one for Point Billy took Gilliad and his helpers about thirty days; the pulling-down cost L 0-15. The old one could have either rotted or burned, but a charge of L 0-16 for "Ditching the meddow" suggests the former because it points out a particular and obvious need: the new barn could not be built on damp ground or it would surely rot.

Long Island buildings seemed prone to that trouble. Point Billy's cousin William Henry Smith, who married Margaret Lloyd, wrote in a letter quoted by Mrs. Robert Malone in *The Smithtown News* that at three o'clock of a morning in the autumn of 1761, the front of

*Chester G. Osborne*

his house "Against the little Dining Room and Chamber above it fell down quite into the Cellar Kitchen with both floors so that Both Them Rooms are Intirely Ruined."

Point Billy himself was to have more trouble in July, 1824, as this letter to his son "Indiana Smith" shows:

"I recd. your letter by mail yesterday and was extremely happy to hear that you was well. You wish to know how we are coming on respecting our old house, and how we make out in respect to raising it. We made out very well in raising it after a weeks work, with all my hands with the Mechanicks, and after we had got it raised on examination we found that the Frame was so rotten that we could do nothing with it and I was under the Nussaty of taking all down and of course we have now to build a New House. And when it will be done I know not.

"Our Harvest is now Ripe. People refuse to work for a bushel of Rye a day. I have been so much employed in Drawing Timber that I have got but little English hay. I have a multitude of business on hand and but few (hired) hands. And I am overwhelmed in Trouble and Expenses and I hope that you

will take these things in consideration and be as prudent as possible.

To "Mr. William Smith, Student in Yale College, New Haven, who is from Suffolk County . . ."

To return to Gilliad: his account has many mentions of "Carting" and "Gitting"; there was "4 days work gitting timber", stone, Sleepers and Lugs; the sleepers were joists laid at ground level to receive flooring, and lugs were probably the parts of sills which tailed into masonry. There was a charge for "teem work", and for carting boards, straw, nails and bricks.

Gilliad wrote that he had to go to "mastick", and put on another charge, nine shillings and three pence "to one days work of my wife". The reader is free to guess at the meaning of that obscure entry. And before we quote his account in full, we should mention that his last name could be deciphered as "Mills" as well as "Miller", and that other Manor papers indicate a "Gilliad Mills" as present in the 1780's.

the Estate of Capt Wm Smith Dr  
June 4th 1808

pulling down the Barn	.....0-15- 0
4 days work gitting timber	..1- 2- 0
Carting timber and Boards	..0-18- 0
teem work	.....0- 8- 0
giting Sleepers and Lugs	.....0-12- 0
timber for Barn dores	.....0- 5- 0
192 feet of Lath	.....0-15- 0



270 feet of plank at—7/6	1- 0- 3
1747 feet of Boards at 4/0	3- 9-10
125 feet of Boards for Barn	
doers at—8/	0-10- 0
gting Stone to put under	
Barn	0- 4- 0
Carting Boards	0- 8- 0
Straw to thatch the Barn	2- 1- 6
Carting Straw	0-12- 0
Black Smith work and Iron	1- 6- 0
4 1/2 days work about thatch-	
ing Barn	1- 4- 0
Boarding the Carpenter	
30 days	3- 0- 0
3 lb of Nails at—1/6	0- 4- 6
6 lb of Nails at—1/8	0-10- 0
1 day tending mason	
5/1 day Board 2/	0- 7- 0
250 Bricks at—5/	0-12- 6
to Ditching the meddow	0-16- 0

For going to mastick L 21- 0- 9  
to one days work of my wife 9- 3  
Gilliad Millers account  
\$53.75

#### Long Island Trees

The interesting item in the October issue of the Forum about the big willow at Centerport did not go by unnoticed. I recently visited the site and took measurements for the records of the Long Island Horticultural Society. The tree proved to be a Crack Willow, *Salix fragilis*, with a circumference of 16 feet 6 inches at a point 2 feet 0 inches above the ground between the root swelling and the bulges of the first branches. This makes it a giant of its kind but not quite the largest on Long Island which is the tree on the J. Phipps Estate at Old Westbury, measuring 17 feet 1 inch in circumference in 1950. However, neither compared with the National Champion of this species which stood on Sunrise Highway in Freeport but unfortunately was removed by the Village in the interests of "progress" in 1950. This tree was 19' 4" in circumference, measured at 4' 6" high.

The Long Island Horticultural Society is now beginning the recurrent ten year recheck of all of Long Island's Big Trees and plans to issue a booklet bringing up-to-date the records given in "The Trees of Long Island". I would appreciate any information from your readers concerning big, historic or unusual trees, to be included in the new census.

George H. Peters,  
175 East Seaman Ave., Freeport.

#### East Northport Was Larkfield

East Northport was once known as Larkfield, before being called Northport Station.



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# Cordwood, Boarders, Etc.

**W**HAT a queer title someone may exclaim! Well, it so happens that this mixture comes from old letters from the collection of family papers of my Uncle Charles Strong, given me by his son Arthur, and a few childhood recollections of my own, to bridge the space of time.

Section 1 — Wood. When I was a youngster, at certain seasons of the year, the road to the bridge was edged with long piles of cordwood, also along the shore under the Vingates, waiting for schooners to come and take it away. When the Strong family built the first bridge in 1879, the Town insisted on their putting in a drawbridge. The reason for that was, because schooners used to come further up the bay at high tide, then, at low tide, they would tip sideways so as to make more easy loading.

However, as the bridge had a dock, schooners preferred to stop there and the drawbridge was never used except for repairs to the bridge. So, when the family built the new bridge, before turning it over to the Town, a drawbridge wasn't needed.

Brookhaven was careful about the cutting of their wood in the early days. They appointed a 'hewer' to take charge and see that wood was not cut unnecessarily and, when cut, must be used in six months. Wood cutting was very important in my great-grandfather's time, as is shown by the following letter, written by him to his brother Benjamin in New York:

"Brookhaven, May 29th .....

"Dear Brother — I did not receive your letter of the 10th until it was too late to write by the last mail. As it respects the pine wood, I should have liked to have known it one month sooner, on account of cutting. I could then have found laborers better than I can now. You write that you want the wood cut four feet long, which is certainly one eighth longer than you generally buy it. In addition to this, the pine wood near the salt water is much better than that which grows on the plains as it has more pitch and less sap. If

*Kate W. Strong*

we agree, shall cut from on the top of the cliff and it is as straight as poplars.

"Wolf, the baker in New Haven, told me my pine was worth four shillings per load more than the wood on the plains. If you have my wood and I deliver according to your proposals on Duane's Wharf and in about September, you must give me for each load thirteen shillings, say reasonable loads, or fifty-two shillings for each six feet cord. You will please to answer this by the next mail.

"Your affectionate brother  
Thomas S. Strong"

Section 2 — Boarders. Boarders were a very profitable business in Suffolk County for many years. Down East, I understand, people often moved out into a small house for the summer and rented their big house built with whaler money, but around here it was all boarders — Tyler's (Neighborhood House), Oaks in East Setauket, and probably others.

There was one on Tinkers Point which burned down during the night when I was a very little girl. I remember I was furious that I

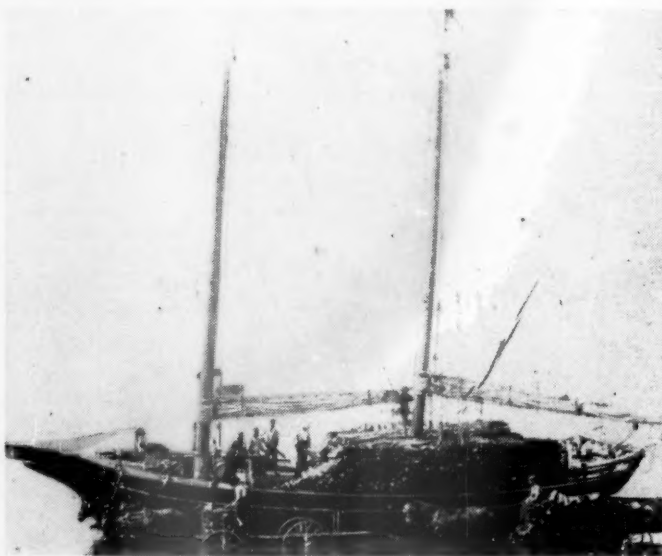
had slept through and heard nothing of the excitement. Also, many a farmhouse took in a guest or two. The first house as far as I know built simply for a summer home was built by the Tinkers on the point in 1893.

This letter written by John A. Dix to grandfather might be of interest:

"New York 31 March 1845

"My dear Sir: I am thinking of going with my family to the seashore on the first of June to remain four months. I desire to get into a farm-house where I can have plenty of room, and be sure of an abundant supply of food . . . bread & butter & milk & sea food. Beyond these things our wants will be few. We are accustomed to living plainly and prefer it on every account.

"As you are acquainted with the people of Long Island, or at least with the people for many miles about you in all directions, I take the liberty of troubling you so far as to ask you whether you know a family in a condition to accommodate us. The requisite will be room. Our name is not exactly Legion, but we are numerous. There is my wife and myself, three children to



Cordwood Vessel Being Loaded

begin with and perhaps four, a servant woman, and, after the first of July, two children more . . . when we are all together nine.

We should therefore require four good rooms. I should like to engage all the spare room in a large house, so as to have no other family with us as boarders, and to be sure of space enough for elbow room, for nothing is so disagreeable as to be crowded in hot weather. I desire also to be near the sea. My family are well-disciplined, & my children give no trouble. And now, my dear sir, if you know of a place that will be likely to suit me, & will drop me a line, you will greatly oblige me.

"I am, Dr. Sir, yours truly,  
John A. Dix"

I wonder whether my grandfather, the Hon. Selah B. Strong, found a place that fulfilled all his requirements. A notation on the back of the letter says that Senator Dix was the father of Dr. Morgan Dix.

#### A Trapped Sting-ray

Since I am just starting my third year as a Forum reader, I would like to take this opportunity to say how much the Forum is enjoyed in our home. My wife and I have come to think of it as a family publication during this time because of the number of close relatives mentioned in the first twenty-four issues. A list of these people and their relationship to me follows.

Capt. Jonathan Edwards, Great-Grandfather

Capt. Isaac Barnes Edwards, Grandfather

Harry J. Blank, Father-in-Law

LeRoy Gardiner Edwards, Uncle

Julia Howell Edwards, Aunt

George R. Latham, Uncle

Lillian Gardiner Redmond, Great-Aunt.

Several of these names have appeared in more than one issue, either by published letter or by mention of another author. Thus almost every copy so far of your splendid magazine has very personal meaning for us.

Capt. Engene Griffing's story of my grandfather in "The Codfishermen" appealed to me in particular. Perhaps he would be interested in an experience which happened much later in the life of this remarkable man known as Cap'n Ike.

One bright day in the summer following my third year in Amityville High School my brother Malcolm and I were fortunate enough to be asked along on a fishing trip to Hedges Banks. Cap'n Ike had my cousin Roy (LeRoy G. Edwards, Jr.) working in the business with him in those days along with two or three hired men. As the sloop Tormentor left Greenport there was a strong northwest wind blowing, and at Hedges Banks the bay was fairly choppy. Three large sharpies put off from the sloop to lift the first trap, and it was soon discovered that a fair sized sting-ray was in it. My brother and I were sent back to the Tormentor for a canvas glove, a hatchet, and a butcher knife. There was only one oar in each sharpie, and with Mac sculling upwind, the trip seemed to take forever in our excitement.

By the time we returned the trap had been lifted and the ray was

almost awash in the outer end of the trap. It measured about four feet across and six feet from head to tail, and the tail was almost three inches in diameter. Four men got hooks onto the fish and lifted it to the surface with the poles to which the hooks were seized. My grandfather then grabbed the tail just above the stingers as it lashed out of the water, using his left hand on which he had placed the canvas glove. With the butcher knife in his right hand he cut off the tail as he balanced himself in the tossing boat. He then stabbed several times cutting the wings to ribbons, after which the men dragged the remains out of the trap and overboard. As a boy of seventeen this made quite an impression, and I feel that even

Continued on page 230

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# "Stripers" I Have Met

*Julian Denton Smith*

**B**EFORE we get started with this article let's have an understanding between reader and author. The latter is of the opinion that nature bestowed certain instincts, certain definite unalterable actions, upon fish such as mobility, reproduction, migration and alleviation of hunger. Beyond these few details of life a fish does not need to know very much. So nature, being tight and not inclined to waste, withheld brains. Consequently fish are just about as dumb as they look.

Consider how remarkable it is that fish can be nourished almost without knowing it. Sea water simply passing over, around and through the gills brings enough food to sustain life. For variety, quick energy and a more solid menu fish can move around, chase down lesser finned creatures, open their mouths and take them in. From examinations of stomachs fish are not too choosy in matter of diet—anything that can be gotten into the mouth will go down.

Protection from the weather is no problem for fish nor is clothing, fashions nor attractiveness to or for the other sex. Their's is a most simple life and needs no brains. And striped bass are not an exception.

When it comes to being predictable, that is a quality of which few fish can boast. Usually we can find some flatfish in a couple of holes south of Massapequa, but it is not a foregone conclusion by any means. Even up at Cuttyhunk there are days on end in the best of seasons when no striped bass is seen or heard of. From an accumulation of experiences we have come to assume that of all fish the striped bass is the most unpredictable. He is in and out as his instincts persuade and nothing can be done about it — he is just that way!

Then when stripers are around and the water is full of them, we are unable to predict what choice morsel to offer on our hooks. Maybe today they would like a piece of shiny metal, maybe a hunk of pork, could it be a bit of worm, perhaps a piece of frankfurter and don't



Doug Brewster,  
Bay Shore, 1940

forget the roll! Then again, of three fishermen working side by side with exactly the same rigs and know-how, the middle one may catch all the striped bass. It will be different tomorrow. I guess this compounded unpredictableness is what makes striper fishing so fascinating.

There is an element of sport about striped bass fishing and it is, apparently, a very big element. I gather that the element is something like this — the degree of sport is in indirect proportion to the stability of the fisherman's tackle. In other words, the biggest striper landed with the weakest equipment constitutes the greatest sport.

Which reminds me of my father

engaging in some trout fishing years ago. He was a man of direct approach, not given to much dilly-dallying and possessed of more than average baymanship. Each year a group of Far Rockaway men went upstate for trout fishing on one of the good lakes. The men annually hesitated to invite my father (but they always did) for they felt he tended to disgrace the sport of trout fishing.

They met at the railroad station bag and baggage plus an infinite amount of fishing paraphernalia. My father arrived exactly in time to step on the train and carrying only a small satchel. No one asked about his fishing equipment for they all knew that on the morning of the first fishing he would produce from his back pant's pocket a hand line, a drop line, wound up on a piece of kindling wood. My father would add insult to injury by digging a few worms, taking a rowboat to the middle of the lake and proceeding to fish in a most unorthodox manner.

I suppose nobody would have felt badly had my father not managed to catch fish. As it was, he kept the camp supplied with all the trout it could use and iced some extra nice ones for us back home.

Not that striped bass would indulge in that kind of worm—but who knows, maybe it would!

I do not have much more style or finesse than my father when it comes to fishing. One Sunday a man had been casting for striped bass all afternoon — this was at the location of old High Hill Beach. He had not had so much as a nibble and his disgust mounted with the decline of the sun. Finally he gave up and thrust his rod into my hands. I had never surfcast in my life but had watched others do it. I made a fairly decent heave. Immediately something hit me and I turned and dashed up the beach like something possessed of the devil and ran the fish right out of the water and up on the sand. A nine-pound striper! I have not surfcast since!

Terribly bad luck befell me one summer night when three of us, fully clothed including wrist watch-

es and wallets, were jacking in a short metal dingey. We were all standing — tight quarters — and I poled from the stern. One of the others had a three-pronged spear on a long wooden handle and the third man had a scapnet and managed the light. Suddenly right along side of us and perfectly still showed a striped bass almost as long as the dingey. I never saw such a fish.

We did not dare try to pin the striper with the spear or whack him with my oar for he would surely have upset us and we could not afford to ruin watches and bring catastrophe, and likely as not lose the fish in the bargain. So we drifted excitedly directly over top of him and the night air fairly sparkled and crackled with cussing and language you don't find in the dictionary.

The late "Chick" Young of Wantagh specialized in trolling. I think he trolled for every fish that swims, and I have been with him when he took a mess of snappers while trolling. Frequently he trolled very slowly for stripers along the bank of the State Channel over near the measured mile. He got in close to the bank and never tired of the poky speed. Every once in

a while he would present his friends with a grand chunk of striped bass. There was the fisherman! He would be all alone and run his boat, a 28-foot Richardson, and fish at the same time right in that busy State Channel.

For years the park commission did not know what to do about the fishing from the bridges on the Wantagh Parkway to Jones Beach. It was extremely dangerous as fishermen and lookers-on would step from between parked cars into the roadway in a moment of excitement or forgetfulness. I remember how that fishing from the bridges started. Park employees got down on the third bridge at night fishing for striped bass. When a strike came the pole was run or handed along the bridge, out and around the end, and then down to the water's edge. Lines messed up terribly but a good many stripers were taken—and a very good many got away. The coming of the six lanes of traffic on the parkways automatically ended the fishing from the bridges.

Suppose that I am all wrong concerning the evaluation of the brains of fish and that they are capable of thought, then I wonder what the one at old High Hill said about me when I ran him out of the water up high and dry on the beach. Ah shucks, he never had time to think!

#### L. I. FORUM INDEX

The Queens Borough Public Library sells a complete index of the Long Island Forum for the years 1938-1947 inclusive, at \$1 postpaid. Also for the years 1948-1952 inclusive, at 50 cents postpaid. They may be obtained by writing to the Long Island Collection, Queens Borough Public Library, 89-14 Parsons Boulevard, Jamaica 32, New York.

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# Mark Twain's L. I. Poet "Lariat"

**B**LOODGOOD Haviland Cutter, self-styled "Long Island Farmer-Poet" and resident of Little Neck for almost ninety years was a "character." The definition of the term as used colloquially is hazy but seems to imply that a person so described differs from the rest of us in dress, speech, actions and moral behavior. Very often, completely honest men are called "characters" or those who dress as they please rather than conforming to the style of the time, so qualify.

Cutter, who was born in Little Neck on August 5, 1817, had a high reputation for honesty, he wore clothes fashionable a generation or so before his time and he spoke with a country accent sometimes communicating with others in rhyming couplets! He was known throughout the old county of Queens for his eccentricities and for his wealth. He was lampooned by the sophisticated, including the nearby metropolitan Press but he was highly respected by those who had business dealings with him both for his shrewdness and fair dealing.

In 1867 Mark Twain and Bloodgood Cutter got to know each other quite well as fellow passengers aboard the "Quaker City," a side-wheeler steamship on its voyage to Europe and the Holy Land. This was the trip recorded in "Innocents Abroad."

There are two references to Bloodgood Cutter in the book; neither of them too complimentary. Here is Mark Twain's own opinion of the Farmer-Poet:

"... but we have a poet and a good-natured enterprising idiot on board and they do distress the company. The one gives copies of his verses to consuls, commanders, hotel-keepers, Arabs, Dutch, — to anybody, in fact, who will submit to a grievous infliction most kindly meant. His poetry is all very well on shipboard, notwithstanding when he wrote an 'Ode to the Ocean in a Storm,' in one-half-hour, and an 'Apóstrophe to the Rooster in the Waist of the Ship' in the next, the transition was con-

*Charles J. McDermott*

sidered to be rather abrupt; but when he sends an invoice of rhymes to the Governor of Fayal and another to the commander-in-chief and other dignitaries in Gibraltar, with the compliments of the Laureate of the Ship, it is not popular with the passengers."

Twain quotes another description of Cutter from the lips of another passenger whom he calls, The Oracle; "a serene over-powering humbug." The Oracle has just finished telling the assembled company how he is able to outwit others and then says referring to Bloodgood Cutter:

"Maybe the Poet Lariat ain't satisfied with them deductions?"

"The Poet Replied with a barberous rhyme and went below." (Whereupon the Oracle continues:)

"Pears like *be* can't qualify neither. Well I didn't expect nothing out of *him*. I never see one of them poets yet that knowed anything. He'll go down, now, and grind out about four reams of the awfulest slush about that old rock, and give it to . . . anybody he

comes across first which he can impose upon. Pity but somebody'd take that poor old lunatic and dig all that rubbage out of him. Why can't a man put his intellect onto things that's some value? Gibbons and Hippocrates and Sarcophagus and all them ancient philosophers was down on poets."

After reading Mark Twain's description of Cutter, the latter, instead of becoming angry, was delighted to be so singled out, and for the remainder of his life boasted of his friendship with Twain and proudly told how he was the "Poet Lariat." Mark Twain's opinion of Cutter was universal among the fair-minded; that the poet was actually a writer of atrocious doggerel but that he was a decent man who meant well. Bloodgood Cutter was never hated, people laughed at him, sometimes resented his great ego but never actively disliked him.

In his 500-page volume, "The Long Island Farmer's Poems" published by N. Tibbals and Sons "for the author" in 1886, Cutter's longest poem (one hundred and thirty pages long!) is "Lines Written on

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Little Neck's Old Morgan Homestead

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the most seasoned fisherman would have marveled at the way Cap'n Ike, well along in his eighty-first year, had complete command of the situation.

Needless to say, the articles by my good friend Julian Smith are always interesting and usually amusing. The stories of the Shinnecock also brought back fuzzy memories of my boyhood. The discussion as to whether she was paddle or propeller driven also amused me. I can remember her hard aground just west of the present Orient Point dock with her stern toward shore. Her paddles were really thrashing the water in an effort to get off. If she had been propeller driven, the screws would have been bent beyond use just in the grounding. At that time I must have been under the age of twelve so possibly my memory is also playing tricks.

Owen Edwards Brooks, Amityville.

## Christening of 1885

In 1885 Bay Shore was best known as a summer resort. Many a happy event was staged there in those days. From Frank Gulden of "Land's End", Bayberry Point, Islip, comes a clipping from a September 1885 issue of the Bay Shore Journal. It reads in part as follows:

"On Saturday morning last the Prospect House was a bustle of preparation for the crowning event of the week — the presentation of a set of colors to the yacht the Growlers Club had taken under their special charge. Load after load of ladies and children were transported to the dock at the foot of Ocean avenue to view the ceremonies. Long and anxiously did they look up the avenue for the expected cavalcade.

"The very elaborate work of preparation required more time than had been dreamed of and instead of 10 o'clock the hour had touched 11 and nearing the noon tide hour when a burst of music and tramp of marching feet was heard. Down the avenue the proud cavalcade passed. Grand Marshall Chas. Gulden (father of Frank) was mounted on his handsome bay charger, gaily caparisoned. Mr. Gulden himself was most wonderfully gotten up. His high silk hat bore aloft a spray of golden-rod, on his breast was a sash of green and gold. It

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is strongly hinted that he will be chosen to head the procession in Brooklyn on St. Patrick's Day next, for 'sure niver was a more gallant b'y strode a hoss.'

"Beside the Knight of the Golden Order of Mustard was the war-like chieftain, John M. Rogers whose appearance was well calculated to inspire the hearts of all beholders, so war-like and fierce was he. In his right hand was grasped a heavy sword (about one foot long) while the scabbard hung at his belt. On his back was strapped a knapsack, and a rifle cartridge box, etc. Epaulets on his shoulders, a military hat and general accoutrements completed his outfit, while his fiery untamed steed was decked out in fine style.

"President Peck with his insignia of office — a white apron and a parasol — kept the foot dragoons in line while Gen. King gave the music on the drum, the 7th Regiment Band furnishing their share on cornet, etc. 'Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching', and down on the dock they came till the yacht Growler was reached. With her sails flapping in the wind she needed only her colors. The company soon took possession of her. Mattie Marvin daughter of C. M. Marvin, advanced to the capstan head and amid strains of music and hearty cheers broke the bottle of champagne as she named the vessel the Growler."

The item continues at length, describing how Scribe Marvin, mounting the Growler's wheel-house, delivered a flowery speech in presenting the colors to Capt. Watts in the name of the Growler Club which he called "a great club of inestimable value to Bay Shore".

"With three cheers," concluded the item, "and a tiger the ceremonies closed and the ladies embarked for a trip on the briny, with Judge A. H. Scoville for first mate, Ed Sayre boatswain and C. M. Marvin for purser. In the afternoon the Growler took out a number of the gentlemen members who enjoyed a trip to Jesse Smith's in good shape."

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Continued From Page 229

the 'Quaker City' Excursion to Palestine." One quatrain refers to his literary friend;

"One droll person there was on board,

The passengers called him  
'Mark Twain',

He'd talk and write all sort of stuff

In his queer way, would it explain."

Even without the immortality accorded him by Twain, Bloodgood Cutter's personality and poetic perseverance would be cause enough for him to be remembered today by those interested in Long Island and its history. He was born in a wayside cottage on the outskirts of Little Neck on the Flushing and Hempstead Turnpike where

he lived until 1903. His mother, Mary Bloodgood, was a native of Flushing.

His parents died when he was but a boy and he was brought up by a stern grandfather, Roe Haviland, a man of some means. Mr. Haviland believed that a boy should have only the rudiments of an education, but should know how to read, figure and to work hard. As a boy Bloodgood attended the Lakeville school but was allowed to read only three books: The Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and Pilgrims Progress.

When he was sixteen his grandfather put him on a coasting steamer. The boy hoarded his savings and then invested them wisely, becoming the owner of three vessels. He was master of one of them and

his first mate was John Waters, a sturdy descendent of the Shinnecock Indians. Cutter always had a reputation for fair dealing and high moral living. He led prayers every day on his ship before work began.

In 1840, when he was 23, he married Miss Emmaline Allen, the daughter of a rich farmer of Little Neck. In 1844 when his grandfather died he was left the entire estate and became very wealthy. He then sold his ships and besides living the life of a gentleman farmer he speculated in the stock market very successfully.

His wife died in 1881 and he

Continued next page

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wrote a poem on the date of her death every year afterward. He traveled a good deal and collected many curios and mementos from foreign countries. In 1891 he bought the old Queens County Courthouse at Mineola at auction. He had once heard Wendell Phillips speak there and wished to preserve the building intact. In 1902, however, he brought a wing of the building to Little Neck where he kept his curio collection.

Cutter called the building, "Poet's Hall" which occasioned a great deal of merriment among his neighbors. This angered him and he rented part of it for a barber shop. Boys of the neighborhood asked him if they could use the hall on the second floor for basketball but he told them that he did not believe in athletics, advising them to get their exercise by doing chores at home!

There isn't too much to say about his poetry which is really doggerel, often the meter and rhyme are imperfect and the thoughts expressed

are not very deep. Shortly after he published his one volume of poems he sent a copy to Queen Victoria who sent him a polite thank you note. He wrote much after 1886 but it was published only in broadside form and much of it left in manuscript. He wrote on such subjects as "The Long Island Railroad", "An Egyptian Obelisk", "The Riverhead Fair", "On Smoking in the Queen's County Courthouse", and "Ladies of New York Sweeping the Streets."

The "Ladies" of the latter effort were not female whitewings but those who, in Cutter's opinion, wore skirts too long.

"I like to see dresses short and neat

Or just above the ladie's feet;  
I like to see a lady's foot

All covered with a nice laced boot."

Poetry? Well hardly. One cynical newspaper headline writer in noting the appearance of a Cutter poem wrote: "Long Island's Sweet Singer Breaks Loose Again!"

When Bloodgood Cutter died

peacefully on September 26, 1906 he left an estate of some \$500,000. Ten years after his death \$150,000 in cash and securities were found in a safe in his house. To quote from a newspaper account of this:

"Here was also found Mr. Cutter's unpublished manuscripts but the executors were not worried about treasure seekers molesting them."

So Bloodgood Cutter, a well known man in his time, a shrewd but honest businessman; egotistical and without talent but a good-natured, kindly soul withal, made his mark in the history of Long Island. Poor as his literary efforts may be, they provide a record of the Long Island of his day. The writer of this article believes that the lore of Long Island is the richer for his contributions.

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# Fire Island's Lone Wolf Wrecker

**P**ROBABLY the best documented of all the tales of wreckers and other human scavengers who lived or operated on Fire Island is that of one Jeremiah Smith. Part true and part legend, it nevertheless is definitely proved by old records that the man left Wethersfield, Connecticut, some 200 years ago and migrated to the south shore of Long Island. It is thought that he took employment with a large landowner for several months, during which time he made an inconspicuous and quiet survey of the activities of not only his own employer, but of several of the landed gentlemen in the vicinity.

His particular interest was in the strange shipments to New York of foreign merchandise, which even his limited intelligence told him had not been grown on their farms or caught with hook or eelspear. There is little doubt but that he came to the correct conclusion that either smuggling or piracy was involved; so satisfied that he was in the longitude and latitude where savage cunning and brutality could make a man rich in a short time, he decided upon a one-man enterpriser; his only ally the grim beach of Fire Island.

Jeremiah Smith first set foot on the island near a gloomy forest located at what is now known as Point O' Woods. The time was early autumn and while not a living soul inhabited the area at that time, the bay swarmed with fish, and flocks of duck and geese, southward bound, swept the sky in countless thousands. Jeremiah would not lack for food in this desolate spot.

The man's first move was to build a crude hut out of the wreckage piled waist-high along the ocean side of the beach, wherein to store his two muskets, pistols, powder and ball and his small store of supplies. Finished with this, he worked feverishly for the next two months upon a larger house, a one-story rambling structure having the garret floored and ready to receive whatever the sea might bring to his doorstep. Comfort was not altogether missing, as not only had the ocean provided every sort of plank

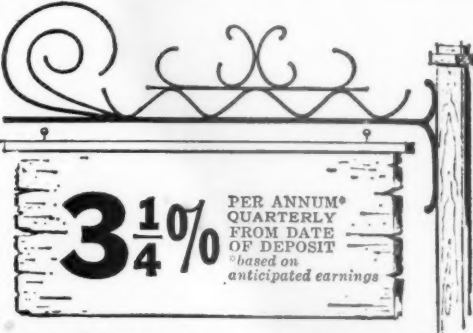
*Douglas Tuomey*

and board imaginable for use in the building, but doors as well, and two serviceable ships-stoves from the galleys of wrecked ships.

By the time the house was closed in, winter had approached, and the howling northeasters whipped the sea into frequent fury. Snow now blanketed the island, but within

Smith's house all was warm and snug. At night he sat before the stove and listened for the crack of a cannon which would mean a ship ashore, firing its gun in the faint hope of some human assistance. Two large oil-lamps gleamed through Jeremiah's windows to guide any who might be thrown ashore by the breakers. He need

*Continued on next page*



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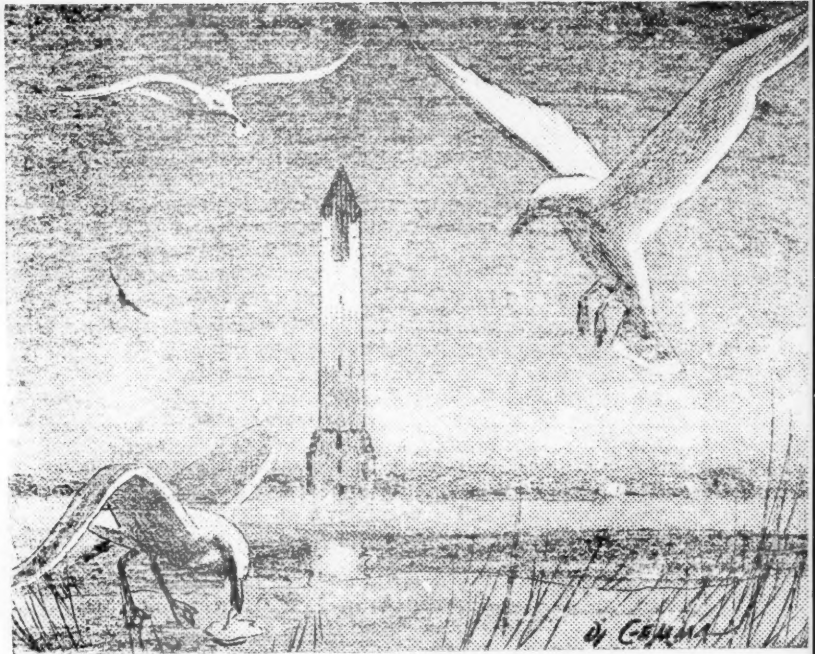
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Continued from Page 234

not move out into the stormy night, only wait until daybreak, then open his door and look east and west along the beach to see what the tempest had wrought.

If by chance his nightly reverie was broken by a pounding on his door, he would fling it open, and with outstretched hands and hearty, booming voice, welcome the half-drowned survivor and guide him to one of the bunks along the wall. He would listen with sympathy to the pathetic story, while he plied the poor wretch with hot rum until he fell into the sleep from which he was never to awake. Once the man had closed his eyes, he would be stabbed to death as quickly and as expertly as one would slaughter



A Sketch by Joseph Di Gemma

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a hog. His clothes were added, he was stripped of any jewelry, and then every trace which was valueless was burnt.

Wrecker Smith never took chances with survivors if they numbered more than two. Records indicate that groups of three, four and five were treated with kindness and courtesy, and after a night's lodging and weather permitting, were ferried across the bay to the mainland. How puzzling it must have been to such shipwrecked groups to see the fleeting glances which passed from face to face of the villagers whom

they told of Jeremiah Smith's benevolence.

Two years passed, and the garret was rapidly filling with bales of French silks and laces, bolts of Irish linen, casks of liquor and every kind of saleable merchandise originally intended for the ports of New York or Boston; all salvaged from the beach or from close-in wrecks by Fire Island's lone and industrious inhabitant. All appeared to be going exactly as Jeremiah had planned, when there came an unexpected interruption.

A new Wreck-Master had been

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appointed and, accompanied by a constable, he paid a visit to Smith's house. Rumor after rumor had been going around about Smith's activities, but the Wreck-Master did not have a search-warrant as actual evidence of any wrong-doing was lacking. As might be expected, the visit brought no results except to make Smith even more cautious.

Only one man other than his potential victims ever saw the inside of Smith's house, and he was a local boatman who sailed his sloop from Islip to New York with a load of clams once a week. He landed at Smith's on the way to the inlet, and together they selected the merchandise which the boatman would sell in the city. Bulk merchandise was not to be despised, but the real producers of Smith's enterprise were the gems, jewelry, and gold and silver trinkets for which there was ever a steady market. According to the later accounts of the boatman, the money for Smith's shipments was divided between them after each return trip.

More than eight years after he landed on Fire Island, Jeremiah Smith disappeared. What actually happened is in doubt. One tale is to the effect that a great fire was seen from the mainland one night, and the next morning his house was found burned to the ground. Of Smith there was no trace, but his boat was missing and it was presumed that he had fired the place himself and departed for parts unknown. Another story is that a landing party from a coastal-pirate looted and burned the house, with Smith in it, after hearing some of the rumors about the wealth he had accumulated there. The third,

Continued on next page

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and possibly the more probable tale is the following:

About a year before Smith's disappearance, a foreign-looking man accompanied by two women, arrived on the island and settled themselves some two miles east of Smith's house. They followed exactly the same procedure as Smith. First the building of a crude shelter and then a fairly large house. Rumor had it that the trio were more savage and merciless than Smith at his best, and they prospered as time and the relentless surf brought salvage and weakened survivors to their welcoming hands. Little is known about what passed between this group and the lone man, but rumor had it that an armed truce existed until Smith fell ill and helpless, whereupon they dispatched him in accordance with the wrecker's own code.

#### Re. Louise Forsslund

I was very interested in the article about Miss Louise Forsslund in the October Forum, particularly the statement that — "She went to great pains to see that a former schoolmate of hers in Sayville, Anne Green, was given the commission to design the front cover of 'Sarah'." The only Anne Green that I knew in Sayville was my mother, and I have no doubt that she is the person to whom Mr. McDermott refers, as I can recall mother reading the original manuscript of "Sarah" while it was being written. I doubt if Louise Foster as we knew her, went to school with mother, however. Mother attended school out near Moriches, but taught for several years in Sayville, and it is possible that Miss Foster was one of her pupils. Charles H. Green, Los Gatos, Cal.



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"Uncle" Jesse's Homestead

#### "Uncle" Jesse Conklin Home

I enjoyed Historian Roy E. Lott's well written tribute to Huntington's old-time stagedriver, "Uncle" Jesse Conklin (Nov. Forum). O. A. Baker.

Note: Mr. Lott has since supplied us with this photo of "Uncle" Jesse's homestead that stood at the corner of Woodbury avenue and Main street, Huntington. Editor.

#### New Museum Director

Mrs. Jane des Grange, new director of the Suffolk Museum and Carriage House at Stony Brook, has been associated with the Orlando Art School in Florida, the Rochester Museum of Art, the Kordite Corporation, and besides teaching art has done much market research. A graduate of Alfred College in this State, she is now residing at Stony Brook.

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**"Across the Years"**

This is the title of an attractive and well prepared book containing "The Story of Floral Park, New York". Written by Edith M. Purcell for the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of that thriving community, it reflects much credit upon the author, those who contributed to its compilation and those who brought the celebration to fruition, headed by Chairman Edmund D. Purcell, Village Historian.

The book abounds in history, including the major part played in local development by John Lewis Childs, noted florist; the railroad, the Vanderbilt Cup races and other activities. Once known as Hinsdale, the village received its present name from the seed and flower industry established there by Mr. Childs. The book makes fine reading and should be in every library on the island.

**Trip Around the World with Dolls**

"A Visual Trip Around The World With Traphagen Dolls" is a unique exhibit currently on view at the Traphagen School of Fashion. The show, in the school's Galleries at 1680 Broadway (at 52nd St.), New York, will continue through Janu-

ary 10, 1959, and visitors are welcome to attend. There is no admission charge and the exhibit is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, closed Sundays and holidays.

This is a dramatic exhibition, covering seven centuries of rare dolls. The oldest, a pair of pre-Columbian tapestry dolls from Peru, are authentically dated not later than the early 14th century. The three dolls shown in the illustration here are all 18th century; the gorgeously dressed blackamoor is a creche doll from the time of Louis XV; and the handsome couple, both attired in silk and brocade costumes of their day, are French dolls of 1750.

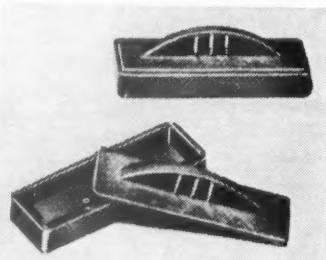
There are hundreds of dolls of many lands in this show . . . dolls that children played with, figurines and fashion manikins. All are in original and authentic costumes, and are displayed against a background of Traphagen's famous collection of world-wide posters depicting castles, palaces, chateaux, monasteries, cathedrals or native landscape, festivals, etc. Included also are examples of modern fashion designs by Traphagen students inspired by the dolls.

There is something for everyone in this exhibition . . . for the children, the travel lover, the artist and designer, and those interested in the ways of fashion.

In 1876 the deposits at the South-old Savings Bank for the first ten days of January totalled \$39,782 — which made news in the local weekly.

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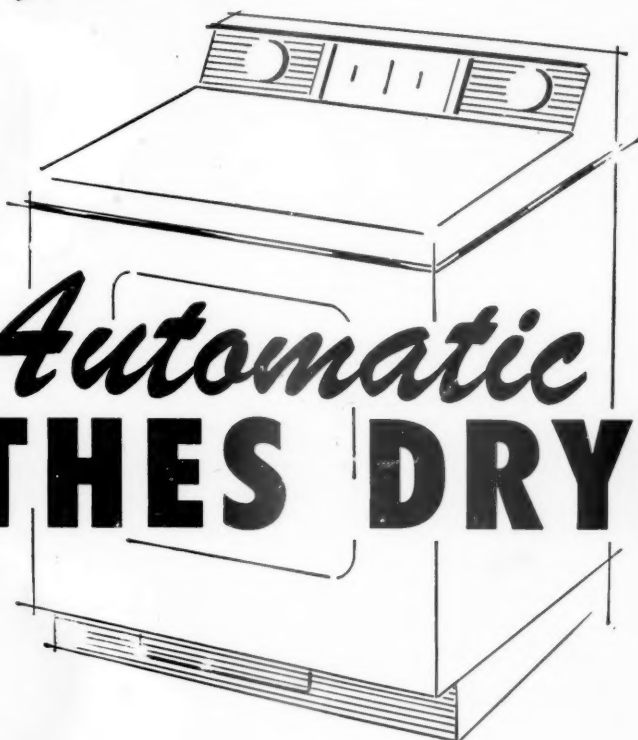
**Eighteenth Century Dolls in Exhibition at Traphagen**



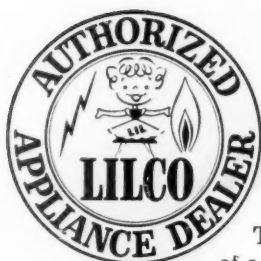
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### Forum Author, Nature Guide

I recently came upon a party of nature students at Jones Beach who were being guided by the L. I. Forum's nature editor, Julian Denton Smith. Upon inquiry I learned that the group belonged to the Audubon Club of Mt. Kisco, N. Y., whose leader, being a Forum subscriber and a reader of Mr. Smith's interesting nature stories, had asked him to act as guide on their pilgrimage to the Park. Of course, Mr. Smith had agreed so to do as he had on other similar occasions. (Mrs.) Hattie Fairfield. (Also a Nature Student).

### John Sloss Hobart's Grave

The Forum has received an inquiry as to where the Hon. John Sloss Hobart of Eaton's Neck, Huntington town, a distinguished Patriot of the Revolution, was buried. Could a reader supply us with this information? Long Island Forum, Box 805, Amityville.

### A Christmas Subscription

to the Long Island Forum is really a dozen gifts — one each month throughout the year 1959.

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### Lance Still's Stage

I am one of your readers who remember Lance Still's stage that used to carry passengers between the old Mascot Dock at the foot of Ocean Avenue and Ginocchio's Corner on Montauk Highway, Patchogue as mentioned in Louise Budd Edwards's article in the October Forum. My memory of such rides reverts 50 years when we had moved from New York City to Farmingville, L. I. due to my dad's illness. I was about 15 years of age at the time. Dad had a peach orchard in Farmingville and we delivered our crop to Ginocchio's in horse and buggy. Having our own mode of travel we followed along with the stage to the old Mascot dock to watch the "passengers" get in the stage for their trek to Montauk Highway. I well remember the hotels of that era.

Often think of those days when having occasion to go from Westhampton to Patchogue, although now we use Sunrise Highway at its beginning in East Patchogue. Tempus fugit! ♦Dick Schwarting, West Hampton.

Sir William Erskine who commanded British occupational forces in Southampton town during the Revolution was extremely popular with local inhabitants.

### Correction, Captains Baker

Regarding the story in the July issue of the Forum, "Rescue at Fire Island", it will probably interest you to know that the picture accompanying the story is not that of Capt. Edward Baker but of his father, Capt. Charles Baker. This has been verified by the latter's daughter, Mrs. Clifford Rhodes of Bay Shore. We enjoy the Forum.

Monetta Baker (Mrs. Chas. E.) Palmer, Patchogue.

Harry Felker  
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